

# The Internet—Good and Evil

*“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Gen. 3:1).*

*“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Gen. 3:6).*

*“And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?” (Gen. 3:9).*

When I think of the marvel of our instant access to messages, pictures, and videos of our loved ones, even on the other side of the world; the access to services, events, news, facts, research, products, and even business opportunities, I sometimes think of our dear sister in faith Eve. Eve, like each of us, was human and weak, and when she met with the master of subtlety, the Serpent, he beguiled and deceived her. None of us could have withstood his power. He drew her attention using his knowledge of God’s command, his knowledge of the Tree, and his knowledge of this dear innocent sister in faith, and asked, “Did God say you cannot eat of every tree in the garden?”

## **Availability of Good and Evil**

The Internet today is like the tree of knowledge of good and evil. As Eve noted, “a tree to be desired to make one wise.” Who of us is not tempted by the desire to be wise? What the Serpent did not explain to Eve is that not only was this direct disobedience to God’s command, the first and original sin in Paradise, but it was the tree of knowledge of both good and evil. Could Eve have even understood this concept of evil when she dwelled in Paradise where she had never encountered evil? We all know that the Internet and social media represents both all the good and all the evil that we can find in the world.

The Internet and social media is like walking down the biggest street in the world, where everything is offered before us. We can be tempted by all kinds of information —products, services, and a myriad of entertainment—anything we can think of. None of these were actually invented on the Internet, but what is new is instant access anytime, anywhere—even on our phones.

## **Internet as a Tool**

I have long been an avid user of the Internet even before there was a worldwide Web or a Google. I was impressed when I was doing a research project for a client and was able to access information at a University research center without going to the library or even leaving home.

Today I still do many projects, and the Internet gives me easy access to information. Google will even provide rough translations to information in many countries around the world. Everything is not on the Internet, but it usually provides a good start and gives connections to many experts who probably have information that I’m looking for.

This is a tree of knowledge of good and evil, and it does not require much effort to find all the evil known to man on the Internet. This is a place of watching for every believer and for every home. God asked Adam, “Where are you?” He of course knew where Adam and Eve were, but He knew that they were hidden. Yet, where were they in their relation to Him as their Creator and Heavenly Father?

## **God Knows All**

One illusion of the Internet is anonymity. It is easy for someone to search for anything if he or she thinks it’s hidden from others. Another symptom of this is a willingness to say just about anything if we think that those words cannot be traced back to us. This illusion emboldens our flesh. This is why God reached out to fallen man to ask, “Where are you?” God reaches out and calls to each of us even today. We know that God knows where we are and what we are doing.

Another place of watching is the wide variety of entertainment so readily available on social media and the Internet. Much of this can start out fairly innocently, but quickly we can find ourselves watching something on YouTube that is not appropriate.

## **Rockford Congregation Discussion**

In January, at a parents evening in the Rockford church, we discussed how we need to provide a refuge from the world in our homes, places that are safe from temptations and where the gospel is preached. We know that we each

bring our own corrupt and weak flesh home every day, but we need to support our young ones and each other to battle against sin.

Some families have put the computer in a central location so that no one is tempted to go to sinful websites, videos, games, or other inappropriate material. Social media is also a concern. What do we do when we have all the power of the Internet in our pocket on our cell phone?

Many schools issue iPads or Chromebooks to students, and these are a central tool to their everyday class. The schools use some screening tools for these computers which limit what kind of sites they can access.

Some parents said that they had installed software to filter out unwanted websites. Others said that they limited time on the computer and phones. We also discussed that we need to be good examples by not spending too much time on our phones or on the computer and to make sure that we are there in person for our children and each other. We need to be there for each other to preach the gospel when we fall into sin—even if we fall into sin on the Internet.

**Mark Wuollet**

## The Internet and Social Media Are Part of Our Lives

The Internet is something that a person just cannot avoid in going through life nowadays. It is a useful tool for taking care of many important matters, and it is also helpful in many everyday practical tasks.

By using the Internet, it is possible to quickly and easily do even those things that would otherwise require significantly more work and time. For example, we can search for information about a car that we are thinking of buying without even going to the dealer to ask questions.

### **Internet's Content Is Immeasurable**

A lot of useful material can be found on the Internet, even that which supports our faith. If on a certain Sunday we cannot get to services, we can listen to the services online. It is also possible to listen to songs of Zion on the Web.

There are also many dangers on the Internet. Often we encounter them without even recognizing them for what they are, and we may remain unaware of many of these. There are an innumerable amount of items lurking on the Internet that could easily contribute to weaning us away from faith.

We may be exposed to these sorts of enticements even when just reading the news, when in the margins of the screen we see a clever lottery ad or something similar. The enemy of souls is very crafty to display even these kinds of enticements in a way that a believer would not know to reject them, but would fall for them instead.

### **Am I Awake?**

It is easy to stay in touch with friends and family members via social media. When we use these sites, it is good to be careful that it does not become too important for us.

I, myself, sometimes notice that being on WhatsApp or some other smart phone app has consumed the biggest portion of my time. It is important to stay in touch with dear ones in this way, too, but if social media starts to play too great a role then it could take time away from face-to-face visits. We can, nevertheless, trust that the Heavenly Father will guide us each and every moment even in this matter as long as we stay “awake” regarding our use of phones and computers.

### **Maintaining Contact via Social Media or Face to Face**

I have sometimes focused my attention especially on my own use of the Internet and have noticed that I use many different applications. In this respect I have often wondered—what benefits do they actually bring to me?

For example, I enjoy browsing Instagram to see the pictures posted there. It has often crossed my mind to ask myself if there is any sense in having Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, all three, when they all do the same things. If I would use only one of them it would leave me so much more time for other things, such as actually interacting with people.

I've experienced this on a practical level when, in certain situations, I have suddenly realized that I have not been using the phone for a while. Especially at services and youth gatherings it has been awesome to realize that I've had no desire to open Snapchat or another application.

### **Faith Edification and Christian Fellowship**

The possibility to make good use of the Web is a great blessing from God. For example, the Internet has created a new dimension for doing mission work. But, as noted earlier, the Internet has a lot of content that is far removed from God's Word and the understandings we have gained through living faith. It is important for us to use social

media and the Internet in such a way that it would serve those purposes that are beneficial for our own faith-life and for the fellowship of believers.

As people we are, from our own part, erring and we may even realize that we have not been successful in these matters either. Nevertheless, it is good to remember that when it comes to our struggling on in faith, we are not in the end held accountable for our own merits or successes.

What is most important is that we wish to remain believing and to put away the sin that has attached itself to us on our journey. It is also very important that we ask for strength from the Heavenly Father to resist the enticements of the enemy of souls even in these matters. God knows the weaknesses of His children and knows exactly what each and every one of us needs.

**Arto Riikola**

**Adapted from Päivämies, no. 12, 2017.**

## Growing Up in the Digital Age

“The following questions and comments are based on the video presentation Screenagers. It reveals the dangers of excessive screen time on smartphones, gaming and other media which can lead to addiction. It offers advice on how children and parents can work together to avoid multiple problems.”

**Eric Jurmu**

### **Things to Visit About:**

- What is the impact of screen use in your home?
- Can too much screen use create tension between parents and children, between spouses, or even between friends? One may be frustrated, another defensive.
- Can when and how you use technology affect self-esteem, social skills, relationships, work, academics, and more?
- How much time do you spend each week on screen-related activities?
- When should screens be turned off?
- How often do you multi-task? Do you think it affects you in any way?
- Why do so many video games involve violence? What can be their effect?
- Have you seen social media affect behavior? In what ways?
- What activities do you like and enjoy that don't involve screens?
- Share positive aspects of technology in your lives.

### **Family Action Items:**

- Strengthen self-control for screen use with clear guidelines.
- Create a contract/family agreement with the goal to help all understand the impact of screen time on the family.
- Visit and communicate. Conversations build trust.

More on Screenagers can be found by going to [www.screenagersmovie.com](http://www.screenagersmovie.com) and FB: @screenagersmovie